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ABSTRACT

This paper examines in detail the problem of evaluation as applied to adult education, and presents results of a study in which adult students evaluated the night school program in Vancouver by means of a questionnaire. The following topics are discussed: the definition of evaluation; the differences between evaluation as applied to adult education and to formal education; the meaningfulness of evaluation; its basic theory; and which questions to ask about the success of adult education and how to secure answers. The Vancouver study revealed that an overwhelming majority of the participants look very favorably on their adult school experiences and consider they are achieving their objectives. A copy of the questionnaire is included. (CL)

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Evaluation of Adult Education

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Education 412

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OUTLINE

1. Definition of evaluation
2. Evaluation as applied to adult education
    a. differences from formal education
3. Meaningful evaluation
    a. a necessary part of the education process
    b. importance to participants
    c. importance to leaders and educators
4. Basic theory of evaluation
    a. must always be in terms of the objectives
    b. determination of objectives
5. Determination of success of adult education
    a. questions to answer
    b. ways to secure answers to the questions
6. Questionnaire of evaluation of adult education presented to adult students in the night school program in Vancouver
7. Results obtained from the questionnaire
8. Analysis of the results
9. Appendix I

Evaluation is the process of assessing the degree to which one is achieving his objectives. It is one of the most difficult and most important tasks facing the director of an Adult Education program. The scientists claim that anything which exists, exists in some quantity and therefore can be measured. Educators, on the whole, agree with this principle and have spent considerable time and effort developing tests, examinations, and various other methods for evaluating the consequences of their teaching efforts.

Very few of these formal devices apply to adult education because of the innate differences between adult education and formal education. One important difference lies in the fact that adult education is wholly lacking in compulsive elements, it is an act of free will. The teacher of adults will have pupils only if he meets their current needs and is able to interest them sufficiently to inspire them to learn. Also, adult education must not be confined to a set course of subject matter as is formal education, but must be flexible to a high degree. Because of these distinctions, ordinary tests and examinations are not adequate or suitable to determine the success or failure of adult education courses. In the first place, adults cannot be compelled to take examinations, and in the second place, examinations would not constitute a reliable index of success or failure.

Because evaluation is only meaningful in terms of the objectives of the adult education program, it means looking at one's present

position in regard to one's goal. It entails a comparison of actual conditions or characteristcis with the ideal. This means finding out how well adults are learning and what they want to learn and need to learn. The adult students asks "To what extent am I accomplishing my purpose?"[1], and the program director asks "To what extent are we helping individuals change in ways which both they and society consider desirable?"[2] Evaluation, then, is important to the participants as it is necessary for them to know the extent to which they are getting the kind of education they want and need. And evaluation is important to adult educators as it indicates to them ways to improve methods and leadership, and to discover unmet needs.

As evaluation is recognized as a necessary part of the educational process, it should be directed chiefly to improving that process. Adult education focuses to a great extent on problem-solving education. After a decision has been reached and acted upon, it is normal to make an assessment of the decision and action in order to find out how well the solution worked. Evaluation tells us the quality of the decision and frequently indicates how it could have been improved. Similar problems, if met again, could be solved more easily and probably better. Being actively aware of their purposes, problems and progress aids the participating adults to make sound judgements which can lead

1 Committee on Evaluation, Program Evaluation in Adult Education, Adult Education Association of the United States, Chicago, 1952, p.6

2. Ibid., p.6

to improvement. Questions raised by evaluation lead the program directors to a search for new answers and stimulate research. The most important outcome of evaluation should be continuous program and leadership improvement. Knowledge of the degree to which their efforts are bringing the desired results acts as an inspiration to the leadership staff and insures professional growth. The basic purpose of evaluation, to stimulate growth and improvement, is met and fulfilled.

Another important aspect of adult education that is based on good evaluation is a sound public relations program. Evaluation gives the adult educator the means of supplying boards of education, school trustees, departments of education and the general public with acceptable evidence that adult education is worthy of continued and expanding support.

The basic theory of evaluation is simple, one needs know only the desired objective and one's present position in relation to that objective. However, three reference points are better - one's goal, present position and one's position at some past time. Comparing the past position with the present position in relation to one's goal, enables the student to judge his progress. Knowledge of his progress enables him to make any necessary corrections or modifications that would lead him to his goal sooner and more effeciently.

The measurement of achievement is possible, at present, in three major classes of objectives, namely, attitude modification, behavioral change and skill or content mastery. Hence the methods of evaluation should be internal and a learner must learn how to assess his own success or failure. A basic principle in evaluation is "know thyself". As previously stated, evaluation is part of the educational process and as such has most value to those who go through it. Self-surveys are effective in that the participants have to develop a clear understanding of the facts before they can attempt to analyse them. In so doing they gain a much greater

appreciation of the problem and a greater impetus to reach a satisfactory solution. Involving the participants in the evaluation process leads them to formulate desirable solutions and to be receptive to change in the direction of these solutions.

We have stated that evaluation must always be in terms of objectives or goals, that is, the desired outcome of the program. The purposes of education are growth and change, so the outcome sought is a change in behavior, in attitudes and in skills and knowledge. The objectives in adult education should be set directly by the participants, and indirectly by the leadership staff. The objectives of the participants are frequently primary, usually have personal or social origins, and are the result of natural drives or cultural influences. The objectives are the results people want and believe to be good. "The leadership staff does not establish the educational objectives for adults. The chief duty of adult educators is to help adults learn how to do better the things they will do anyway, and to reveal higher activities and to make these both desirable and possible. They should not attempt to dictate learning goals."[3] In other words, the objectives must grow from the needs of the people as they feel, or can be led to recognize them.

How are objectives determined? Many objectives, such as wanting to learn to typewrite, to dressmake, to learn or improve a trade skill, or to complete academic courses leading to a diploma, are specific and readily recognized. Other objectives, such as community responsibility, good family relations, racial problems, moral values, and international relations, may be equally powerful, but vague and requiring disciplined thinking. Under the guidance of the leadership staff, thoughtful discussion can lead to sharper meanings and specific concepts.

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3 Committee on Evaluation, Program Evaluation in Adult Education, AEA, Chicago 1952, p.11.

Whatever the objective, the group must always remain aware of such questions as "What are we trying to accomplish?" and "What behaviour changes are we trying to bring about?". Evaluation needs to be a built-in part of the total educational program. I should be continuous and take a long-term view. Educators must be constantly aware of it and continuously involve their students in gathering evidence and making judgments about program effectiveness. Both educators and students must be willing and ready to review the program and the problem at any time. Continuous active involvement with the evaluation process will help assure maximum growth and development of the participants.

The adult learner needs to know whether or not his learning is effecting any kind of change in him and should consider such questions as "Has it increased my usable fund of reliable information?"[4] This question would refer not only to an accumulation of new facts, but also to the relationship between different bodies of facts and ways of distinguishing the various levels of reliability of information. "Have I changed my vocabulary"[5] or, in other words, have I learned to make use of some new ideas? "Have I learned any new skills?"[6] "Have I learned how to make reliable generalizations?"[7] "Have I learned to think in terms of moral values?"[8] "Have I altered any attitudes?"[9] A self-examination by adult learners following a set of questions similar to the foregoing is informative both to themselves and to the leadership staff. The answers indicate, to some extent, the success of the adult program being given.

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4 How to Teach Adults, "Adults Evaluate Themselves", Leadership Pamphlet , Adult Education Association of the United States, Chicago, 1959, p.46.
5 Ibid., p.46
6 Ibid., p.46
7 Ibid., p.46
8 Ibid., p.46
9 Ibid., p.46

The answers to such questions may be secured in different ways. Orderly discussion by the entire group, or by divisions into smaller groups, with each person speaking in turn, are most fruitful. Questionnaires are perhaps the least fruitful, but are at times the only means to obtain information from a variety of groups. The attached questionnaire was prepared following the thinking in the preceding material. With the permission of the Adult Education Department of the Vancouver School Board copies were submitted to a randomly selected group of adult students. The questionnaire was designed to attempt to get an assessment by the students themselves as to how effective they felt their adult school experiences had been. The results follow.

Bibliography.

1. Committee on Evaluation. Program Evaluation in Adult Education. Adult Education Association of the United States, Chicago, U.S.A., 1952.

2. Edwards, F. "An Adult School Inquiry", Adult Education, pp. 153-56, Spring 1962

3. How To Teach Adults. "Adults Evaluate Themselves", Leadership Pamphlet #5, Adult Education Association of the United States, Chicago, U.S.A. 1959.

4. Kempfer, Homer. Adult Education. McGraw-Hill Book Co,, New York, Toronto, London, 1955

Results.

1. Participants:

	Male	Female	Unlisted	Total
All categories	208	179	5	392
Academic credits	68	40	2	110

2. Age groups:

	All Categories	Academic Credits
17-25	170	69
26-30	63	27
31-40	65	9
41-50	60	4
51 up	24	0
unlisted	10 ?6?	1

3. Number of years attended Night School:

1 year	211	9 years	1
2 years	64	10 years	5
3 years	45	12 years	1
4 years	22	13 years	1
5 years	14	14 years	1
6 years	11	15 years	1
7 years	4	18 years	1
8 years	2	Unlisted	8

4. Number of hours attendance per week this year:

1 hour	1	9 hours	10
2 hours	105	10 hours	1
3 hours	49	11 hours	9
4 hours	116	12 hours	6
5 hours	46	14 hours	1
6 hours	20	15 hours	1
7 hours	5	Unlisted	12
8 hours	10		

The students taking academic credits were in attendance the longer hours per week.

5. In answer to the question "What prompted you to attend night school?" many students listed more than one reason, as they were taking more than one course. The breakdown is as follows:

Academic credits	110
Trade or self-improvement	205'
Homecrafts	35
Hobbies	75
Social	9

The social aspect of their adult school classes was an important second reason for many of the participants, as it was mentioned in their answers to "What is one of the best features of your course?" Many referred to "a pleasant evening out, in addition to learning something."

6. 258 referred to their adult school experience as very helpful, 113 as fairly helpful, 4 as an unpleasant experience and 2 as a waste of time. 15 did not answer. Of the 4 who considered their adult school experience as unpleasant, 3 were taking academic credits, and of the 2 who considered it a waste of time, 1 was from the academic group.

7. 316 indicated that they had acquired new skills, and 62 that they had not. Of the 110 taking academic courses, 59 felt they had acquired new skills, 42 that they had not, and the remainder did not indicate, which probably means no.

8. 96 indicated that they used their new skill frequently, 158 fairly often, 41 seldom and 18 never. Of these 18, at least 10 qualified their answer with "not yet". These were students of such courses as shorthand, typing and drafting.

9. 49 indicated they used their new skill socially, 34 academically, 140 at their work, and 51 at home. Again there was some duplication as some indicated multiple uses of the newly acquired skill.

10. 147 considered their adult school experience had increased their usable fund of information a great deal, 203 some, 19 very little and 7 not at all.

11. 106 felt they were using this newly acquired information a great deal, 199 were using it some, 33 very little and 7 not at all. Of these last 7, 5 were taking academic courses.

12. 118 stated that their course had prompted them to read a great deal more and to take a greater interest in the field they had been studying, while 204 noted some increase in interest, 35 very little and 15 none. Again, the last 2 categories were weighted in the academic courses.

13. 139 indicated that their adult school experience had stimulated them to take a great deal more interest in other fields, 174 felt some broadening had been achieved, 37 very little and 23 none. One indicated his interest in reading had led him to adult classes, rather than the reverse.

14. 260 stated that their adult school course had met the need that prompted them to take it, while 115 felt that it had only partly answered their need and 8 considered that it had done nothing for them.

17. 220 indicated their intention to attend night school in the coming year, 134 indicated maybe and 28 no. Among those taking academic courses, 66 stated they were returning, 30 maybe and 14 no. Of these 14 however, 2 indicated that they were returning to day school. It is interesting to note the greater percentage not returning among those taking academic courses. This is, no doubt, accounted for, in part, by the fact that the courses currently being taken complete the credits necessary for a diploma.

15. A survey of the answers to the query "What is one of the best features of your course?" revealed that the participants, with the exception of 2 classes, agreed that the teaching had been excellent. They especially liked the more informal atmosphere of adult classes and the friendly interest and help of the leadership staff. They found the courses stimulating and informative and the atmosphere pleasant and friendly. They enjoyed their fellow students and found the exchange of ideas, especially in the trades, very interesting. They were enthusiastic about their new or improved skills, again especially in the trades, and in the opportunities for advancement in their work as a result of these new or improved skills. Getting a text book pertinent to their trade was also appreciated by many.

Those taking hobby and home-craft courses felt that their newly acquired skills and information had improved their homemaking, entertaining, personal appearance and general confidence in themselves.

Among those taking academic courses, the best features, other than the obvious one of completing necessary credits towards a diploma, were the improvement in their skills with the English language, both in writing and speaking, and the increase in their knowledge in other fields, particularly of Canada and International affairs.

Some mentioned one of these features and some another, but the general feeling coming from all the various comments was, with few exceptions, one of gratifying accomplishment and well satisfied students. They had evidently enjoyed their courses, experienced mental stimulation, and in many instances had acquired a new and useful skill.

16. There were few suggestions for improvements to their courses. Those suggestions that were repeated sufficiently to form a pattern included requests for assigned homework, more drill and practical work in class,

and longer, more inclusive courses. Several requested follow-up courses, a bit more advanced. These requests came mostly from those taking trade-improvement courses. Some suggested a mimeographed outline of the course,covering basic procedures, to use as a reference and as a guide for further study. Use of the school library was asked by a few. It is interesting to note that many suggestions showed an eagerness for more learning.

Two groups, one in the trade field and the other in an academic course, were obviously unhappy with their instructor. Their criticisms were lack of organization and preparation plus waste of time in class. In the trades course the men felt that the instructor was not at all up-to-date in his field. Their disappointment was obvious and certainly soured their attitude towards adult education.

Mechanical problems mentioned by some, included requests for machinery in better operating condition, as the sewing machines in the Home Economics rooms. Availability of texts presented another problem for others. These, however, could be problems that would not re-occur.

The students taking academic courses, especially in the 17-25 age group, were less enthusiastic and more caustic in their comments. Many, as might be expected, were taking courses previously failed, but necessary to get a High School Diploma. These students probably started their course with a bias against their subject and did not lose this. However, it was pleasant to note that some did, and stated that in the more relaxed adult atmosphere they were enjoying their course- as one aptly put it "Dawn". Increased maturity no doubt contributed to their changed attitudes. The older students taking academic courses were more enthusiastic.

The age groups presented an interesting study. The 17-25 group correlated to the academic courses and the trade improvement courses

The older groups were well represented in all the craft courses from trade improvement to homecrafts to hobbies.

From the evaluation point of view the responses revealed that an overwhelming majority of the participants look very favorably on their adult school experiences and consider they are achieving their objectives. Their enthusiasm augurs well for a continually expanding adult education program in Vancouver and reflects credit on the Adult Education Department of the Vancouver School Board.

Appendix 1.

Suggested changes to the format of the questionnaire after checking nearly 400 would be:

3. How many years have you attended night school?

1. First year.....	4. Fourth year....
2. Second year...	5. Fifth year.....
3. Third year....	6. More than 5...

4. How many hours a week do you attend this year?

1. 1 hour....	4. 4 hours...
2. 2 hours...	5. 5 hours...
3. 3 hours...	6. 6 hours or more....

Questions #8,11 and 12 would have a fifth choice added, namely 5. Not yet....

The reason for the change in questions 3 and 4 is that some participants were not clear as to what to answer - for example some answered 50 hours per week attendance where perhaps the course was in total 50 hours. As to years attended, many, attending for the first time, put down 0 years.

Questionnaire on Evaluation of Adult Education.

Please answer as accurately as possible. In most questions a check against the statement that most nearly answers the question for you is all that is required.

1. Male 208. Female 179. unlisted 5

2. Age group 17-25 170 26-30 63 31-40 65 41-50 60 51 up 24. unlisted 6

3. How many years have you attended night school? .....

4. How many hours a week do you attend this year? .....

5. What prompted you to attend night school? 1. Academic credits 110.
   2. TRADE or self-improvement 205 4. hobbies 75
   3. homecrafts 34 5. social 9

6. How do you rate your adult school experience?
   1. very helpful 258 3. unpleasant experience 4
   2. fairly helpful 113 4. waste of time 2 No response 15

7. Have you acquired any new skills? Yes 316 No 62

8. If you answered Yes to #7, do you make use of your new skill?
   1. frequently 96 3. seldom 41
   2. fairly often 158 4. never 18

9. If you answered Yes to #7, do you make use of your new skill
   1. socially 43 3. at your work 140
   2. academically 34 4. at home 152 ? * see p. 12

10. Has your adult school experience increased your usable fund of information?
   1. a great deal 147 3. very little 19
   2. some 203 4. not at all 7

11. If you answered positively to #10 ...

1. Male 208. Female 179. unlisted 5

2. Age group 17-25 170 26-30 63 31-40 65. 41-50 60. 51 up 24. unlisted 6

3. How many years have you attended night school? .....

4. How many hours a week do you attend this year? .....

5. What prompted you to attend night school? 1. Academic credits 110.
   2. TRADE or self-improvement 205 4. hobbies 75.
   3. homecrafts 34..... 5. social 9....

6. How do you rate your adult school experience?
   1. very helpful 258..... 3. unpleasant experience 4...
   2. fairly helpful 113.. 4. waste of time .....2..... No response 15

7. Have you acquired any new skills? Yes 316.. No 62.

8. If you answered Yes to #7, do you make use of your new skill?
   1. frequently 96... 3. seldom 41..
   2. fairly often 158. 4. never 18...

9. If you answered Yes to #7, do you make use of your new skill
   1. socially 47.... 3. at your work 170..
   2. academically 34. 4. at home ...152...? * see p. 12

10. Has your adult school experience increased your usable fund of information?
   1. a great deal 147. 3. very little 19..
   2. some ....203..... 4. not at all ....7..

11. If you answered positively to #10, are you making use of this newly acquired information?
   1. a great deal 106. 3. very little 33..
   2. some.....199..... 4. not at all ..10..? * see p 12

12. Has your course prompted you to read a great deal more, or to take a greater interest in the field you are studying?
   1. a great deal 118.. 3. very little ...35.
   2. some....207..... 4. not at all ....15.

13. Do you consider your adult school experience has stimulated you to take a greater interest in other fields, in other words has it broadened your interests?
   1. a great deal 139. 3. very little 37...
   2. some .....174... 4. not at all ..23..

14. Do you feel that your adult school course has met the need that prompted you to take it?

   1. Yes 260. 2. Partly 115.. 3. No 8....

15. In your opinion, what is one of the best features of your course? Write your answer on the back of this sheet.

16. Have you any suggestions that you feel would improve your course? Write your answer on the back of this sheet.

17. Do you plan to attend night school next year?
   1. Yes 220.. 2. Maybe 134. 3. No 28...

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